

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

EYES ONLY

1972 SEP 18 PM 10 20

T O P S E C R E T 182350Z SEP 72 SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVELY EYES
ONLY VIA BUNKER CHANNELS
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER
TO : AMBASSADOR BUNKER, SAIGON
CITE: WHS2165

DOS Review Completed.

SECTION ONE OF TWO

SUBJECT: MY SEPTEMBER 15 MEETING WITH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE

REF: SAIGON 0161 AND PREVIOUS

1. YOU SHOULD GIVE THIEU A FULLER RUNDOWN OF OUR SEPTEMBER 15 MEETING WITH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, AS WELL AS PLANS FOR THE NEXT MEETING, ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

2. I MET FOR ALMOST SIX HOURS WITH LE DUC THO ON SEPTEMBER 15. THEY WERE DEFENSIVE; THEY PROFESSED EAGERNESS TO SET THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DEADLINE FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT; AND THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN SO EAGER TO HAVE EARLY AND FREQUENT MEETINGS. THEY REPEATEDLY AND ALMOST PLAINTIVELY, ASKED HOW QUICKLY WE WISHED TO SETTLE AND THERE WAS NONE OF THEIR USUAL BRAVADO ABOUT HOW U.S. AND WORLD OPINION ARE STACKED AGAINST US. I SENSED THAT THEY WERE GROPING FOR THEIR NEXT MOVE AND THEIR TACK WAS DEVOID OF ANY APPARENT CLEAR-CUT STRATEGY.

3. ON THE SUBSTANTIVE SIDE WE TABLED OUR PEACE PROPOSAL EXACTLY AS AGREED WITH GVN EXCEPT FOR TWO ITEMS ON WHICH THE PRESIDENT DECIDED IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN OUR POSITION IF WE WERE TO BE ABLE TO PURSUE THE STRATEGY WE HAVE OUTLINED TO THIEU. FIRST WE RETAINED REFERENCE TO "REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION" IN POINT 4 (A). WE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT THE GVN SERIOUSLY OBJECTS TO THIS PHRASE SINCE THEY HAVE ALREADY AGREED TO REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION LATER IN THE SAME POINT. SECONDLY, WHILE WE MADE SOME CHANGE IN DEFERENCE TO THE GVN VIEWS CONCERNING THE COMPOSITION OF THE CNR DESPITE THE LATENESS OF THE GVN POSITION, WE DID NOT FEEL THAT WE COULD COMPLETELY ACCOMMODATE THE GVN IN LIGHT OF THE CONSIDERATIONS PREVIOUSLY OUTLINED. THAT PASSAGE, AS TABLED WITH DRV, NOW READS:

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"THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:
--REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM TO BE DESIGNATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM;
--REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NLF TO BE DESIGNATED BY THE NLF;
--REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM DESIGNATED BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AND THE NLF.
THERE WILL BE INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISION OF THIS ELECTION."

4. AS THIEU WILL NOTE FROM FOREGOING WE DID NOT MAKE ANY REFERENCE TO EQUAL REPRESENTATION ON THE COMMITTEE. YOU SHOULD ALSO EMPHASIZE AGAIN THAT WE DID NOT TABLE ANY PROCEDURAL PROPOSAL AT ALL IN LIGHT OF THE VARIOUS OBJECTIONS RAISED BY THE GVN AND DESPITE OUR ALREADY HAVING WATERED IT DOWN. IN SHORT WE BELIEVE THAT OVER THE PAST WEEKS WE HAVE BENT OVER BACKWARDS TO MEET GVN CONCERNS TO THE POINT OF THREATENING TO UNDERMINE OUR STRATEGY, AND IN ADDITION WE MADE LAST MINUTE CHANGES DESPITE THE LONG DELAYS IN GETTING THE FINAL GVN VIEWS.

5. I ALSO CAME DOWN HARD ON THE NORTH VIETNAMESE RECENT HANDLING OF POW RELEASES AND THEIR RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS, PARTICULARLY THE PRG STATEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 11.

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SECTION TWO OF TWO

6. FOR THEIR PART, THEY TABLED THE NEW SUBSTANTIVE AND PROCEDURAL PROPOSALS WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY CABLED TO YOU. I TOOK THE POSITION THAT ALTHOUGH THEIR DOCUMENTS CONTAINED SOME NEW FORMULATIONS, THEIR PROPOSALS RETAIN THE ESSENCE OF THEIR FUNDAMENTALLY UNACCEPTABLE POLITICAL DEMANDS. WE WILL NOT ACCEPT THESE PLANS. I TOLD THEM THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO MODIFY THEM. THEY AGREED THAT WE SHOULD STUDY EACH OTHER'S DOCUMENTS AND MEET AGAIN. SYMPTOMATIC OF THEIR IMPATIENCE, THEY WERE VISIBLY DISAPPOINTED WHEN I FIRST PROPOSED MEETING SEPTEMBER 29. THEY COUNTERPROPOSED SEPTEMBER 22. WE HAVE FINALLY AGREED TO SEPTEMBER 26. AGAIN AT THEIR SUGGESTION, WE HAVE AGREED THAT THE SEPTEMBER 26 MEETING COULD BE CARRIED OVER TO A SECOND DAY OF MEETINGS ON SEPTEMBER 27. WE THINK IT HAS COSMETIC ADVANTAGES AND NO DRAWBACKS.

7. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIEU MAY BE DISTRESSED THAT WE TABLED POINT 4 AS WE DID BUT BELIEVE THAT THE TIME HAS COME TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH HIM IN THE UTMOST SERIOUSNESS.

8. IN ADDITION TO POINTS IN PARAGRAPH 4 ABOVE, THIEU MUST RECOGNIZE THAT IF WE HAD NOT TABLED POINT 4 AS WE DID WE WOULD HAVE HAD VIRTUALLY NOTHING NEW TO POINT TO IN OUR POLITICAL OFFER. CERTAINLY THIEU MUST ALSO BE CAPABLE OF MAKING THE DISTINCTION IN HIS OWN MIND BETWEEN AN ESSENTIALLY SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE WITH CAREFULLY CIRCUMSCRIBED FUNCTIONS AND A FULL-BLOWN GOVERNMENT. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CNR WERE CAREFULLY WORDED TO AVOID USURPING ANY OF THE REALLY MEANINGFUL ADMINISTRATIVE GOV FUNCTIONS. FINALLY, AS THIEU HIMSELF CAN SEE FROM THE NEW DRV PROPOSAL, OUR NEW OFFER HARDLY APPEARS ACCEPTABLE TO THEM.

9. WE MUST ASK FOR THIEU'S FULLEST COMPREHENSION AS WE PURSUE OUR NEGOTIATING STRATEGY. IF WE HAVE NOT YET PROVED TO HIS SATISFACTION THAT HE HAS COMPLETE U.S. SUPPORT, THEN WE DESPAIR OF EVER BEING ABLE TO CONVINCE HIM OF THIS. YOU SHOULD POINT OUT TO HIM THAT THE VERY STRATEGY WHICH I OUTLINED AT OUR SAIGON MEETINGS SEEMS TO BE PAYING OFF. THE DRV HAS NOT GONE PUBLIC AND THEIR EAGERNESS TO MEET AGAIN, POSSIBLY EVEN FOR TWO DAYS, WILL BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL HERE. YOU MAY ASSURE THIEU THAT AT OUR NEXT MEETING WE WILL TABLE NO NEW PROPOSALS AND THAT OUR STRATEGY WILL BE TO FORCE FURTHER MOVEMENT IN THEIR POSITION.

10. FINALLY, IF IN YOUR JUDGMENT IT SEEMS NECESSARY, YOU SHOULD TELL THIEU IN WHATEVER WAY YOU BELIEVE MOST APPROPRIATE THAT WE WILL NOT TAKE KINDLY TO ANY LEADS OR ASPERSIONS ON OUR GOOD FAITH. SHOULD THE GVN IN ANY WAY GO PUBLIC ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS OR THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN US THEY WILL BE RUNNING THE GREATEST OF RISKS. THIS IS NOT 1968. THEY CAN BE CONFIDENT OF OUR CONTINUED FRIENDSHIP WHICH WE HAVE UPHELD AT SUCH COST AND RISK DURING THE PAST FOUR YEARS. THEY IN TURN MUST SHOW GREATER UNDERSTANDING.

11. RE THIEU'S INQUIRY ON SOVIET ATTITUDE MENTIONED IN SAIGON 0160. I OUTLINED OUR POSITION ON VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS, EMPHASIZING THAT WHILE WE GENUINELY SOUGHT A SETTLEMENT WE WOULD NEVER AGREE TO THE OTHER SIDE'S DEMAND THAT WE IMPOSE A COALITION GOVERNMENT OR IN EFFECT GUARANTEE A VICTORY FOR THE COMMUNIST FORCES. THE SOVIET RESPONSE WAS VERY LOW KEY ON BOTH MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC MATTERS. THEY BACKED THEIR FRIENDS IN A MINIMUM WAY. THEY EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR COMPLETE U.S. WITHDRAWAL AND A CEASEFIRE. THEY WERE PRO FORMA IN ENDORSING THE COMMUNISTS' POLITICAL POSITION. THEY WISHED US WELL IN PARIS. THEY CLEARLY WANT THE WAR TO END BUT DO NOT KNOW WHAT MORE TO DO. MOSCOW IS OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED IN PURSUING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITHOUT LETTING VIETNAM INTERFERE. THEIR RESTRAINED ATTITUDE CAN IN PART BE TRACED TO OUR FORTHCOMING POSITION IN PARIS. YOU CAN BRIEF THIEU ALONG THESE LINES BUT UNDERLINE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS STRICTLY FOR HIM ALONE.

WARM REGARDS.

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